
פרשת בשלח

פרק יז פסוק יא

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הַמַּבְלִי אֵין־קָבְרִים בְּמִצְרַיִם לְקַחְתָּנוּ לָמוֹת בַּמִּדְבָּר מֵהַזֹּאת עֲשִׂיתָ לָנוּ
לְהוֹצִיאָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם:

חז"ל

עֲשָׂרָה נִסְיוֹנוֹת נִסּוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֶת הַמָּקוֹם בְּרוּךְ הוּא בַּמִּדְבָּר, שְׁנַיִמָּאֵר (במדבר יז: כב) וַיִּנְסוּ אֹתִי
זֶה עֲשָׂר פְּעָמִים וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי: (אבות פרק ה משנה ד)

מושג

עֲשָׂר נִסְיוֹנוֹת נִסּוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לְהַקְבִּ"ה, שְׁנַיִם בָּיִם, וְשְׁנַיִם בַּמַּיִם, שְׁנַיִם בָּמֶן, שְׁנַיִם בְּשָׁלִיו, אַחַת
בְּעֵגְל וְאַחַת בַּמִּדְבָּר פֶּאֶרֶן (מְרַגְלִים) (ערכין טו).

Translation:

Ten tests did our ancestors test Hashem: Two on the sea, two with water, two with the מן, two with the quail, one with the calf, and one in the Desert of Paran (spies).

Explanation:

Just as the Mishnah in Pirkei Avos teaches that just as Avrohom was tested with 10 tests, so too our ancestors tested Hashem in the desert ten times, as the Pasuk says "They have tested me ten times and did not listen to my voice¹." Avrohom's merit thus protected them when they sinned².

These ten sins are called נִסְיוֹנוֹת, from the word נִס, because they were extra-ordinary occurrences, beyond the natural desire to sin. After all the miracles they saw, and all the incredible goodness Hashem bestowed upon them, it should have been unthinkable for them to not trust Hashem. It therefore took the ten extra-ordinary acts of Avrohom to protect them from these ten extra-ordinary sins³.

Looking in the Pasuk:

Upon seeing the army of Mitzrayim chasing them, Bnei Yisroel question sarcastically⁴ whether Moshe took them out of Mitzrayim because there was a lack of burial space in Mitzrayim. This was the first of the ten נִסְיוֹנוֹת and the first of the two נִסְיוֹנוֹת on the sea. The second נִסְיוֹן on the sea takes place when the Torah tells us that the people only trusted in Hashem and Moshe when they saw the bodies of the Egyptians washed up on the shore⁵.

Musag Learning Outcomes:

Know: The 10 נִסְיוֹנוֹת and their connection to the tests of Avrohom Avinu.

Understand: The origins of the word נִסְיוֹן and the reasons for its use here.

Think: Why Chazal enumerated the tests in pairs and how this analysis affects our understanding.

1 כב כי כְּלִי־הַאֲנָשִׁים הָרְאִים אֶת־כַּבְדִּי וְאֶת־אֹתָתִי אֲשֶׁר־עֲשִׂיתִי בְּמִצְרַיִם וּבַמִּדְבָּר וַיִּנְסוּ אֹתִי זֶה עֲשָׂר פְּעָמִים וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי:

2 See note #1

3 See note #2

4 Rav S.R. Hirsh writes: The sharp irony even in moments of deepest anxiety and despair is characteristic of the witty vein which is inherent in the Jewish race from their earliest beginnings.

5 See note #3

NOTES

1. The Maharal in his commentary Derech Chayim on Avos asks why the Mishnah would tell us of the sins of our ancestors. He answers that this Mishnah is to be seen as a continuation of the previous Mishnayos which told of Avrohom Avinu's tests. He understands that the Mishnah is teaching us that when the Jews sinned in the desert they were protected from Hashem's punishment by the merit of Avrohom having successfully passed the ten tests with which Hashem had tested him. Thus the purpose of this Chazal is to credit Avrohom Avinu with the protection of the Jewish people. (Perhaps this may provide further insight into the first Brocho of Shmonei Esrei in which we conclude מגן אברהם. Not only does Hashem protect the descendants of Avrohom, he protects them in the merit of Avrohom.) The Maharal develops this idea further as we will describe in the following notes.

2. The Maharal explains that the word נסיון, a test, shares the same root as the word נס, a miracle (נ.ס.ה), because just like a miracle is something above nature, so too a test is when someone is being challenged to act above his nature.

In this vein, the Maharal explains the use of the word נסיון to describe the ten sins of Bnei Yisroel in the desert. The word נסיון seems to be inappropriate here as one would not say that the people 'tested' G-d. Rather, explains the Maharal, the sins here are called נסיונות in that they were not ordinary sins⁶. An ordinary sin is when someone gives into his natural urges and appetites and follows his יצר הרע. However, here, their lack of trust in Hashem was simply impossible to explain. By any measure, the multiple times Hashem had saved them in the most miraculous ways should have easily led them to trust in Him. We are dumbfounded by their lack of trust, just as we stand unable to explain a miracle.

3. The Torah tells us:

וַיִּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־מִצְרַיִם מֵת עַל־שֵׁפֶת הַיָּם: לֹא וַיִּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַיָּד הַגְּדֹלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיִּירָאוּ הָעָם אֶת־ה' וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּה' וּבְמֹשֶׁה עֲבָדוּ (שמות יד:ל-לא)

The Gemoroh explains that the Jews were concerned that just like they had passed through the sea, so too had the Egyptians. They continued to show a lack of trust in Hashem, until they saw the Egyptian bodies on the shore. Thus, the Gemoroh tells us that the two נסיונות on the sea were אחת אחרת, one as they descended and one as they ascended.

The wording of the Musag taken from the Gemoroh, is unusual. Why were the ten נסיונות all mentioned in pairs⁷? Perhaps, using the approach of the Maharal that we have followed above, one could answer that the נסיונות are best understood when looking at them in pairs. For example, their lack of trust in Hashem as the Egyptian army was chasing them does not seem to be as 'extraordinary' or 'unnatural' as their lack of trust after passing through the split sea. One could almost understand their fear of the Egyptian army bearing down on them. For they could reason, perhaps Hashem punished the Egyptians with the מכות but will not use miracles to save Bnei Yisroel. However, after קריעת ים סוף how could they possibly entertain the possibility that the Egyptians were somehow saved as well? Therefore, only after the second נסיון did we see that even their first challenge was not the result of 'normal' doubt, but rather an 'unnatural' lack of trust as well.

This idea is reflected in the Pasuk in תהילים which the Gemoroh uses as a source to the second נסיון:

אֲבוֹתֵינוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם לֹא־הִשְׁכִּילוּ נִפְלְאוֹתַי לֹא זָכְרוּ אֶת־רַב חֲסִדָּי וַיִּמְרוּ עֲלֵי־בָנִים־סוּף: (תהילים קיז:ז)

The first half of the Pasuk, which would refer to the first נסיון, talks of לא השכילו, they did not *understand* Hashem's wonders, while the second half of the Pasuk, which would refer to the second נסיון, says לא זכרו, they did not *remember* G-d's kindness. (The Pasuk concludes, "And they rebelled

6 With this explanation we can understand why certain sins committed in the desert were not included in the list. For example the sin of immoral behavior with the daughters of Moav at the end of Parshas Balak is not mentioned.

According to the Maharal we can answer that the sin of immorality was the result of being seduced by their יצר הרע, it was not an 'unnatural' sin, and thus would not be termed a נסיון.

7 Except for the last 2, the עגל and the מרגלים - which the Maharal also explains as having been paired.

on the the Yam, at Yam Suf", the two references of Yam, referring again to the two נסיונות). The Pasuk seems to be saying while they might not be held accountable for not *understanding* that the wonders in Egypt (the Makos) were proof of Hashem's love for them, they certainly should not have *forgotten* the more obvious exhibition of Hashem's great kindness towards them at the splitting of the sea. Therefore, concludes the Pasuk, when looked at together, both are to be taken as a rebellion against Hashem.

4. Additional Questions:

- See if you can explain the reasons for the pairing of the other נסיונות.
- A banner is also called a נס as in ושא נס לקבץ גליותינו. How could we use the explanation of the Maharal regarding the word נס to understand why the word was used regarding a banner?

עשר נסיונות - פסוקים

שנים בים

1. ויאמרו אל-מִשֶׁה הַמְבַלִּי אִין-קְבָרִים בְּמִצְרַיִם לְקַחְתָּנוּ לְמוֹת בַּמִּדְבָּר (שמות ידי)
2. וַיֵּרָא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-מִצְרַיִם מֵת עַל-שִׁפְתַי הַיָּם: ... וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּה' וּבְמִשֶׁה עֲבָדוּ: (שמות יד:ל-לא)

שנים במים

3. וַיָּבֵאוּ מִרְתָּה וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לְשַׁתֵּת מַיִם מִמֶּרְהָ כִּי מָרִים הֵם עַל-כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמָהּ מִרְהָ: וַיִּלְנוּ הָעָם עַל-מִשֶׁה לֵאמֹר מַה-נִּשְׁתָּה: (שמות טו-כד)
4. וַיִּחַנוּ בְּרַפְיִדִים וְאִין מַיִם לְשַׁתֵּת הָעָם: וַיָּרֶב הָעָם עִם-מִשֶׁה (שמות יז-ב)

שנים במן

5. אֶל-יִצְחָא אִישׁ מִמְקוֹמוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי (שמות טז) וַיְהִי בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי יִצְחָא מִן-הָעָם לְלַקֵּט (שמות טז)
6. וַיֹּאמֶר מִשֶׁה אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ אֶל-יִוְתֵר מִמֶּנּוּ עַד-בִּקְרָ: וְלֹא-שָׁמְעוּ אֶל-מִשֶׁה וַיִּוְתְרוּ (שמות טז:ז-ח)

שנים בשליו

7. מִיִּיִתָּן מוֹתָנוּ בְּיַד-ה' בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּשַׁבְּתָנוּ עַל-סִיר הַבָּשָׂר בְּאֲכָלְנוּ לֶחֶם לְשִׁבְעָ... וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מִשֶׁה הֲנִנִּי מִמְטִיר לָכֶם לֶחֶם מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם (שמות יז-ד) בְּשִׁלּוֹ רֵאשׁוֹן כִּשְׁהַתְּחִיל הַמֵּן לִירֵד הִיא שְׁלִיּוֹ יוֹרֵד עִמּוֹ דְכַתִּיב וַיְהִי בְעָרֵב וְתַעַל הַשְּׁלִיּוֹ וְגו' וּבְבִקְרָ הִיִּתָּה שְׁכַבַת הַטַּל וְגו' וְלֹאֲחֵר זְמַן מְרֻבָּה הַתְּאוּוֹ יוֹתֵר
8. וְהָאִסְפָּסְפָ אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבּוֹ הַתְּאוּוֹ תֵּאָוֶה וַיִּשְׁבּוּ וַיִּבְכּוּ גַם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ מִי יֵאָכְלֵנוּ בָּשָׂר: הַ זְכָרְנוּ אֶת-הַדָּגָה אֲשֶׁר-נֹאכַל בְּמִצְרַיִם חֲנָם (במדבר יא:ד-ה)

אחת בעגל ואחת במדבר פארן (מרגלים)

9. וַיַּעֲשֶׂהוּ עֵגֶל מִסִּכָּה וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶּה אֱלֹהֵיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלִיף מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם (שמות לב:ד)
10. וְלִמָּה ה' מְבִיא אֶתְנוּ אֶל-הָאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְנַפְל בְּחֶרֶב וּנְשִׁינוּ וְנִטְפְּנוּ יְהִי לְבַז הַלְוֹא טוֹב לָנוּ שׁוֹב מִצְרַיִם: (במדבר יד:ג)